

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6556

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation, February 4, 2020

Title: An act relating to expanding reporting options for mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect.

Brief Description: Expanding reporting options for mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect.

Sponsors: Senators Cleveland, Darneille and Wilson, C.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation: 1/28/20, 2/04/20 [DP-WM].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) to implement a web-based reporting portal accessible to those mandated by law to report child abuse and neglect, subject to appropriation.
- Directs DCYF to implement a call-back option for callers placed on hold to provide a phone number for DCYF to return a call to complete the report of child abuse and neglect, subject to appropriation.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, REENTRY & REHABILITATION

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Darneille, Chair; Nguyen, Vice Chair; Walsh, Ranking Member; Cleveland, O'Ban, Wilson, C. and Zeiger.

Staff: Alison Mendiola (786-7488)

Background: Mandatory Reporting Laws and Offenses. Mandatory reporting laws require certain people to report suspected child abuse or neglect to DCYF or law enforcement, when a reporter has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect.

People designated as mandatory reporters are:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

- any practitioner;
- county coroner;
- medical examiner;
- law enforcement officer;
- professional school personnel;
- registered or licensed nurse;
- social service counselor;
- psychologist;
- pharmacist;
- employee of the Department of Early Learning;
- licensed or certified child care providers or their employees;
- employee of the Department of Social and Health Services;
- juvenile probation officer;
- placement and liaison specialist;
- responsible living skills program staff;
- HOPE center staff;
- state family and children's ombuds or any volunteer in the ombuds's office;
- Department of Corrections personnel;
- guardian ad litem;
- court appointed special advocates;
- any person in an official supervisory capacity with a profit or nonprofit organization;
- administrative, academic, or athletic department employees of higher learning institutions; and
- any adult who has reasonable cause to believe that a child who resides with the adult is a victim of abuse or neglect.

Any person who has reason to believe that child abuse or neglect has occurred may report that information.

Summary of Bill: Subject to funding appropriated for this specific purpose, DCYF must establish, develop, and implement a web-based reporting portal accessible to those mandated to report child abuse and neglect. DCYF must establish, develop, and implement a call-back option for callers placed on hold to provide a phone number for DCYF to return a call to complete the report of child abuse and neglect.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Many mandated reports complain about the time it takes to file a complaint, 30 percent of calls are dropped which presents a roadblock to protecting children. We need to provide CPS with the technology they need to respond to maltreatment in a timely manner. The Washington State Office of the Family and Children's Ombuds annual report highlighted this issue. One issue where a reporter had two reports to

make and was told only one could be made and the person would have to call back to make the second reports. Doctors have reported waiting over 40 minutes, leading to dropped calls. Adding a web portal and call back option will improve customer service, and more importantly, child safety. DCYF is aware of this and has tried to make improvements, like letting callers know what information will be needed to make a report.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Annette Cleveland, Prime Sponsor; Patrick Dowd, Washington State Office of the Family and Children's Ombuds.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.